

With the Department of Energy (DOE) reporting an increase in the price for heating fuel this winter, Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) today sent a letter to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) calling on the Department to immediately release as much Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding as possible under the current stop-gap spending bill which expires November 18, 2011.

With continued uncertainty over the final FY2012 funding levels for LIHEAP, release of these funds means states will have the opportunity to help those with greatest needs now. The funding level of \$3.4 billion for LIHEAP in the current FY2011 spending bill would provide funding for seven million households. Ordinarily, the funds would be released throughout the year.

“Even in good economic times, LIHEAP is a critical lifeline for countless Vermonters,” said Welch. “Now, with wages stagnate, a tough economy, rising fuel prices and Vermonters struggling to recover from Tropical Storm Irene, it is even more critical. Winter is upon us in the northeast and we need to get the money to those who need it now.”

The DOE’s Energy Information Agency projects average household heating expenditures will reach record highs this winter, with predicted increases of three percent for natural gas, seven percent for propane, and eight percent for heating oil. The National Energy Assistance Directors’ Association anticipates 9.4 million households will seek assistance with their energy costs through the LIHEAP program this winter, up from 8.9 million last year.

To see a copy of the letter, [CLICK HERE](#) .